



Montgomery County, Virginia

CITIZEN GUIDE

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Who determines how land can be used?

The use of land is greatly influenced by the County's Comprehensive Plan, subdivision ordinance, and zoning ordinances and subsequent zoning designations. For every parcel in the County, there are certain uses that are allowed by right, and other uses that are allowed only under certain specific conditions established by the Board of Supervisors in granting a Special Use Permit. Some uses are not permitted under any circumstances. Any property owner in Montgomery County can apply for a change in the zoning (rezoning) or special use permit for his or her property. These applications are referred to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

What is the Planning Commission?

The Planning Commission is a group of County citizens appointed by the Board of Supervisors to serve as an advisory body regarding land use planning. The Commission's job is to review each application for rezoning or special use permit, conduct a public hearing to receive public comment, and then make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, which makes the final decision. Citizen input is a vital part of this process.

Where can I find out about issues coming before the Planning Commission?

Adjacent property owners are notified by mail of rezoning and special use permit applications. The County also posts a distinctive public hearing sign on the property that is the subject of the application. Public hearing notices appear twice in the legal advertisement section of the Roanoke Times, in the NRV Current, two consecutive weeks prior to the meeting date. You can also find the Planning Commission's agenda on the Department of Planning and GIS Services website www.Montgomerycountyva.gov/planning.

How can I get the facts about an application that has been submitted?

The entire contents of the Planning Commission packet for each meeting, containing agendas, application materials for upcoming public hearings is posted for public review on the Planning Department website the Friday before each Planning Commission meeting. All application materials are also posted on the department website under the heading "Pending Applications and Requests" prior to Plan Review meetings, which are typically held on the third Thursday of the month. Keep in mind that you cannot always rely on the applicant or neighbors to give you all the information you need to know, so if you want more information, you should contact the Planning and GIS Services Department.

On what does the Planning Commission base its recommendation?

Every application is unique and involves its own set of issues. However, the four major issues that are generally of greatest importance to the Commission in making its recommendation are:

- Does the proposed use conform to the Montgomery County Code?
- Does the proposed use conform to the Comprehensive Plan?
- Is the proposed use compatible with surrounding development?
- What impact will the proposed use have on the County's roads, utilities, schools, and other public facilities and services?

How can I make my opinions known to the Planning Commission?

The most effective way to participate is to attend the public hearing and voice your opinion. At the public hearing the applicant is given five minutes to present his or her case to the Commission. All other speakers are limited to five minutes per person, so comments should be concise to make sure you get your point across in the time allotted. It helps to prepare your remarks in advance. If you have a large group--such as a church or homeowners' association--attending a public hearing on an application, it is best to have a spokesperson to serve as a representative. Comments also can be given through written correspondence or email to the Planning Department.

When and where does the Planning Commission meet?

The Commission normally meets on the second and third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room on the second floor of the Montgomery County Government Center, located at 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg VA 24073.

Does the Planning Commission accept petitions?

Signed petitions pertaining to a particular application become part of the public record when submitted.

What if I can't attend the public hearing?

If you are not able to attend a public hearing, there are other ways to make your opinions known:

- Write, email, or call your Planning Commission Members.
- Write, email, or call the Montgomery County Department of Planning and GIS Services. Contact information for all staff members is available under the "Staff" link on the Planning Department homepage.

All comments will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors and become part of the public record.

**For additional information contact:
Montgomery Co. Planning & GIS Services
755 Roanoke Street Suite 2A,
Christiansburg, VA 24073
Ph: 540-394-2148; Fax: 540-381-8897
www.Montgomerycountyva.gov/planning**